

Chair Soto called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present: Clr. Simard, Clr. Valley, Clr. DiZoglio, Clr. Drew, Clr. MacLaren, Clr. Marsan, Clr. Pesce, Clr. Santos, and Chair Soto.

Acceptance of the Agenda

MOTION BY: Councilor Pesce, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to accept the agenda.
UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Pledge of Allegiance/Invocation/Moment of Silence

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation given by Councilor Santos, and remained standing for a Moment of Silence for Mario Consoli.

Public Participation

Heather Plunkett, 115 East Street, mentioned our community is made up of many different and religions. She is curious why we are conducting a city meeting in the name of Jesus Christ. That is different, kind of uncomfortable if you are not Christian. She spoke on resolution TR-26-25, about the social media safety for age 16 and under. She was curious on the initiative which she thinks is being done in good faith. It is a good idea to limit social media access and to know what kids are looking at. If it is going to be on city devices given to kids to use because we do not use textbooks anymore, it is all chrome books and different computers. If you are going to limit access to that, meaning putting parental controls on, they can access social media, but you also want to do a parental education and community outreach and research and reporting. She is curious how they are going to get your information if they do not have access to it. *“How do you know what the kids are looking at if the public devices don’t do that if the public devices don’t have access?” “Are you wanting to look at their personal devices at home?” “How would you create a report and study based on that?”* She does not understand how that would work. On the parental education and community outreach, the Mayor and his mental health task force would create a parental tool kit and distribute materials to schools. *“Who would determine the validity of the material being distributed, what experts are being used to determine if this information is credible?” “Not credible?”* There is a lot of information on health care in general, mental health. There is a lot of different philosophies just in medicine of what will work for one ailment over another. She is curious how just a task force would determine what kind of material we should distribute, what really is good for mental health and not for children 16 and under. *“Who is going to determine this information and is it credible?” “Be transparent just so we know how the studies are being conducted. If you did discover something. “Is someone going to be given a list of students?” “Are you looking at this as individuals or the community as a whole?”* She would not want a child who is 8 years old to be labeled in a certain way and have that follow them all through their school year because they looked at something. For example, if a child that is 10 or 11 looks at something LGBTQ,

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someone has determined that is unhealthy. *“Is that child labeled?”* She is curious what is determined healthy, not healthy. *“What will we do to ensure the safety of kids, the privacy of children, and the privacy in the home?”* If you are monitoring private devices, that just seems a little bit of overreach. Overall, it is a great idea. We just want to make sure it is validated and helpful rather than potentially hurtful.

Deb Wilkins, 55 Sugar Hill Circle, spoke about the residential kitchens, the preparation of cottage food. She thanked Councilor Valley for sponsoring this ordinance for the City of Methuen along with the Cosponsors Councilor DiZoglio as well as Councilor Soto. She is very excited to talk about this, to see that you were all open to have this discussion. She spoke about the benefits of the cottage food preparation in the residential home. Some of it is straightforward. Some of it might be a little outside the box. But, for the most part supporting any small owned local business is a win for this city, for any city, and in this case, we are a small local woman owned business. That is a positive. There is a very low safety food risk with cottage food, non-hazardous type food, shelf safe food, food that does not require refrigeration, very low risk. You could consider it baked items. Various examples are popcorn and things of that nature. There is very little to no start-up costs for us small business owners. They do not have any money. This is the reason they are looking to start a business is to grow some of that money. Having the ability to do it in a residential kitchen is really going to help them flourish. It also gives them a chance to see if it is right for them. It might not be right. She may not have the time. She may not have the dedication. There may be too much of a demand. That is unknown. It is a safe and affordable way to operate out of their residential kitchen. It is providing economic growth for the city. If their idea does take off and they want to pursue it, they are going to stay in the city because the city supported them. They may look toward food truck or look to a commercial property. But right now, they do not have the time or the money as she mentioned to do this. By working out of their home kitchen, it is going to give them flexible hours that we all need. But, depending upon their given day, they may not be able to work 8 to 4. Maybe they could only work 8 to noon one day and 12:00 to 4:00 the next day or maybe it is a weekend. But they have that level of flexibility. The city is going to generate money whether it be from permits, licenses, or whether it be from overall city growth. People are going to come to Methuen whether it is to buy products, participate at the local fairs, farmers' markets, whatever that might be that we are offering in the City of Methuen. The local businesses will be there supporting them. In turn, you are going to get consumers and residents coming into the city, maybe buy a house, open a business. There are lots of positives there as well. One of the big things here locally made products while maintaining these safety standards that protect our community, our goal is to work with all of you, not to eliminate this idea or these thought processes. But let us work together. We have the ordinance tonight. She is hoping that it will pass. She also wants to say that she and Melissa Cavazos as a small local business are more than willing to pilot this. There are recommendations for staffing as part of the ordinance.

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They are more than willing to pilot it and go through the process. Let us see if it works, what can they do to help the permitting, the licensing, whatever that may be.

Eddie Santiago, 98 Railroad Street, father of two children, noticed that the street has a lot of traffic. He was thinking about doing a petition for that. His wife typed one out, and he would like to know how to go about that. He read: "We the residents and community members respectfully request the installation of wide speed bumps on Railroad Street, specifically in the area where the Rail Trail parking begins. This section of Railroad Street has become increasingly dangerous due to the high volume of vehicles traveling at high speeds. The risk is compounded by the fact that this is not only a residential neighborhood but also a key access point for the Rail Trail, a space where families, children, runners, walkers, and cyclists gather daily. The combination of residential activity and recreation use the main heightened safety measures. Wide speed bumps would serve a crucial traffic calming solution, encouraging drivers to reduce their speed and remain alert as they pass through this shared community space. By implementing this measure, the City of Methuen would be taking an important step toward protecting residents who live along Railroad Street and showing the safety of families and children accessing the Rail Trail and preventing accidents and the environment. There was an accident two days ago in front of his house about 50 feet away from where his babies sleep. He didn't take any record because it was late at night, but his wife also states that a lot of people are hitting the curb where it turns into it seems like it turns into one lane where it hits the five corners. That is also an issue. Everybody in the community and on the street agrees. He would like to know how he can take a step forward and making sure that this area is safe. It is the future of his kids.

Chair Soto responded by saying he has two Councilors in the central district: Ella MacLaren and Yanilda Santos. She encouraged them to connect and work together on that matter.

Vice-Chair Pesce read an email from Jason Mottola: "*Good afternoon Neily, my name is Jason and I live at 107 Anderson Drive. I am a recipient for the city council meeting agendas via email. Professionally I am the Vice President and Chief Technology Officer for Auto Use, and independent auto finance company headquartered in Andover. I have a question regarding the contract for 25 HP laptops and accompanying 24" monitors. Who is responsible to source the requirements for these computers and request pricing? In my opinion the per user costs @ \$1,267.99 seems excessive. I truly do not mean to deliver this as a complaining resident however based on my experience, I believe this could have been satisfied for less money. Signed a concerned resident with a wife and two children attending MPS also experiencing increasingly elevated costs throughout all facets of daily life. Thanks, Jason Mottola.*"

Vice-Chair Pesce read an email from Kelsey Shibilia, 22 Riverview Avenue: "*Good afternoon, I would like to request a moment of silence for Emmanuel Damas, a MA resident who died due to medical neglect in an Immigration Customs Enforcement Camp. Thank you for your on-going commitment to highlighting senseless political violence. Kelsey Shibilia*"

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Organizational Business

Councilor John Drew has been added to the Veterans Committee
Councilor Simard reported that their next meeting will be April 6th and Councilor Drew has been added to the Veterans Committee

Assignment of Council Members to Public Memorial Committee

Chair Soto distributed copies of Order #910 Establishing a Council Memorial Committee and read it into the record. Members are: Clr. Pesce (Chair), Clr. Drew, Clr. DiZoglio, Clr. MacLaren, and Chair Soto would act as tie breaker. Ex-officio members: Mayor Beauregard, City Veteran Services Officer and the Director or Community Development or any designee.

Councilor MacLaren announced, on behalf of the ad hoc committee addressing the audio/visual technology in the Great Hall, Methuen Community Studio's Director put the survey put together to assess the technical components and gather opinions regarding the Great Hall. She noted there are packets and QR Code for the survey on Councilors' desk and at the podium for the public.

Reading and Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meetings March 2, 2026 regular meeting

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Proclamations/Correspondence: Citations for Johan Lopez and Walkiria Manzueta – Councilor Santos read and presented citations to Johan Lopez and Walkiria Manzueta.

Chair Soto declared a five minutes recess. Upon return, members present: Clr. Simard, Clr. Valley, Clr. DiZoglio, Clr. Drew, Clr. MacLaren, Clr. Marsan, Clr. Pesce, Clr. Santos, and Chair Soto.

Consideration of Appointments: None

Presentations/Projects/Department Updates: None

Mayor's Report

Regarding all things related to municipal solid waste, the city had a one-year renewal in its contract with Harvey. It could be exercised at the city's sole discretion. After reviewing the current market for trash, recycling, and disposal services, it became clear that exercising that option could be in the city's best interest because it locks in existing rates that would otherwise

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increase significantly based on current market conditions. Through recent negotiations with the contractor the city has reached an agreement with Harvey for the coming year and secured several favorable concessions. First Harvey has agreed to reduce the city's bill for carts by \$200,000 (40%). Those are costs that the city otherwise would have incurred if the contract had been terminated or the final year had not been exercised. Second, the contractor has agreed to directly handle things like cart swaps, deliveries, and repairs in-house which is something he had been pushing for us to secure in terms of services from a potentially new contractor. Third, Harvey will conduct a citywide roll out of its app so residents can contact the company direct regarding trash collection or cart related issues. This would remove the city as a middleman and help make the program a bit more efficient through that way. Finally, the company has agreed to deploy a bilingual team member to work with city staff as needed to assist Spanish speaking residents. These changes will be formally executed shortly through the one-year renewal document which is currently being prepared by procurement with assistance from the Solicitor's office. At the same time, the city's RFP for long term trash and recycling services remains active. That RFP has been amended to seek services beginning July 1st, 2027, which allows additional time to solicit competitive bids from both regional and national contractors.

Murphy's farm: He appealed the decision of the Dracut Zoning Board approving the Murphy's Farm development in Dracut. It is a project that is very likely to have significant traffic impacts on Methuen. That appeal leads to a mediation session on Friday involving the city's legal team, our Economic and Community Development staff, and our consulting engineer from TEC. Prior to mediation, the developer had committed \$200,000 for traffic mitigation, benefiting the city under certain conditions through an agreement with the Town of Dracut. As a result of Friday's mediation, Methuen was able to secure an additional \$400,000 from the developer for traffic mitigation in the Wheeler Street area, bringing the total commitment to \$600,000 for the City of Methuen. This puts the city in a much stronger position to leverage additional funding from the state for the eventual construction of traffic improvements. As with any litigation, there is never a guarantee that any concessions will be made. Securing these additional resources represents what he thinks is a positive outcome for the city, at least in the context of the land court case. The process is still far from over. The next phase will move into engineering and traffic planning, where all options will remain on the table as we work with the Town of Dracut and Mass DOT to develop the safest possible traffic configuration for the residents in that area. He will continue to keep Council informed.

DPW/Public Safety Buildings: The Mayor addressed the long-term facilities for DPW and public safety departments. The needs assessment for a new DPW is complete by Weston and Sampson. We are currently in the process of conducting a similar needs assessment for potential new public safety buildings. Once that work is complete, the next step would be site selection. His thinking is that we need combined headquarters for both the police and fire departments and a separate DPW facility. This is a process that will help the city determine the most practical and

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cost-effective locations to support the operational need of these departments in the long-term needs of the community. As these discussions move forward he will continue to keep the City Council and the public informed as they work through the planning process he will say that this is moving at a faster pace than it has at any other point in recent years. He is excited about the progress that is underway.

During the last meeting he informed Council of his plan to submit a community project funding grant request to Congresswoman Trahan's team to help us get after phase two of the Arlington neighborhood infrastructure project. The project was one of twenty projects across the district that the Congresswoman selected. We are moving forward to the next level in terms of securing additional funds from the federal government to help us complete that ongoing project.

Searles Estate: Regarding the Searles Estate, he will be scheduling a briefing for the City Council on Monday, April 6th at 6:00 p.m. before the next regular meeting. He will be in touch with the Chair about coordinating the special meeting to facilitate that update.

Upcoming Events: Grand opening of Aroma Joe's on Haverhill Street is happening on Wednesday, March 18th at 1:00 p.m. The St. Patrick's Day Parade organized by Clr. Drew, Clr. DiZoglio and others is happening Saturday, March 21st at noon. The parade route is the reverse route of the Santa Parade, starting at Nicolson Stadium and ending at the Pelham Street Park & Ride.

The Methuen Literacy Group is hosting their launch event at the Timony on Tuesday, March 24th at 6:00 p.m.

The city's annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held at Greycourt on Saturday, April 4th at 11:00 a.m.

He is planning Methuen's annual Earth Day Cleanup festivities for Saturday, April 25th. There will be more details on the website soon.

Councilor Marsan asked if the city would be able to cut Kopelman and Page from the Murphy's Farm case soon.

Mayor Beauregard said one of the challenges that keeps them in the mix and the city paying the legal bills is the need to resolve it.

Councilor Marsan asked if we are looking at water rates for Dracut.

Mayor Beauregard responded Methuen provides a portion of their supply and most of it from Lowell. They do get a portion from Methuen which is an ongoing discussion with TSI. He will keep the Council informed. Right now, the only progress at this point is regarding the land court case.

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Councilor Santos asked the Mayor about the feasibility plans for the police department, fire department, and DPW and if there is a timeline when this is going to happen. *“When is Council going to be able to see the outcomes of the feasibility studies?”*

Mayor Beauregard said he has some information from Weston and Sampson regarding DPW and a needs assessment. But when it comes to a site selection, his goal is to try to narrow that down to a short list, which we are in the process of trying to do. He had a call recently from our contact at Weston and Sampson regarding trying to do that. We need to narrow that down. Right now, we have the Quinn Building space where police are housed. We have the Central Fire Station. When we talk about space for a combined facility that presents some challenges regarding current land available to do something like that. On top of that we have the DPW factor. He has some things he is considering and discussed some of them publicly in the past, but he wants to remain cautious regarding some thoughts he has about possible sites. It hinges on identifying the best possible space. That is something that is not exactly straightforward in a community like ours, but this is something that has been an issue for decades. We are finally getting after it which is good. In terms of any start dates for this, it is hard to commit to that. Nevertheless, we are moving forward as fast as we can on it.

Councilor Santos requested that the Mayor keep her informed. She asked if these projects are listed in the city for the long-term Capital Improvement Plan.

Mayor Beauregard said they have had this conversation at the City Council level about the DPW facility. Originally, former Councilor Finocchiaro, former Councilor Saba as well, put a strong emphasis on trying to use some AARPA Funds for this. Given the fact that we do not have an obvious site in mind for DPW, we thought we potentially had the Battye property but there were a lot of environmental issues. That resulted in this being a lot slower than it otherwise had been anticipated back when we received the AARPA funds a couple of years ago. Given where we are now, we do have funding in the CIP for the feasibility study for the public safety building. This is something the Council saw fit to secure the funding for that in the CIP. That part is in play but beyond that, in terms of funding, a new public safety building, a new DPW facility, we would be looking at probably needing to do some long-term bonding to fund that. But, at the very least the initial aspects by way of the feasibility studies, those are in the CIP now.

Councilor Simard said he has received pothole complaints. There is one on Forest Street that he addressed with Director Bower. Everyone is probably fielding those calls. He suggested focusing on the main streets before the smaller ones.

Mayor Beauregard said there is funding in the CIP for roads and they continue to allocate funds for that every year. The challenge now for DPW is they are doing their best to get out there and identify those areas that need some help. He encouraged anyone who is fielding complaints from residents to pass them along to him, Pat Bower, and Felix from DPW so they can make sure they are prioritized. He encouraged residents to utilize the seeclixfix app. This

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is something that is an annual challenge. We have the resources to get after it. It is just a matter of prioritizes needs as they arise.

Councilor Drew mentioned how the Mayor spoke on Harvey and how we are going to continue with Harvey. A few weeks ago, Council passed a position for DPW to hire a trash logistics coordinator. From everything said that Harvey agreed to, handling the carts, dealing with the missed trash issues, and helping to inform residents with the bilingual piece. *“How do you see this position going forward?” “Is it still going to be a necessity?”* A lot of that was part of the job description.

Mayor Beauregard said he views the position as a critical necessity. Right now, with the carts, we have the system through Open gov for people to order carts. That has been a mess over the course of the past several years just in terms of taking those orders in and distributing them. The vendor should have had responsibility for that. This will correct that. When we talk about bilingual services that would be someone who would be able to help, but we still need that designated point person to be out there in the community enforcing the trash ordinance. Having the help from Harvey will be an aid to the person selected to the sanitation role. Keep in mind too that contracts come and go. We are going to be at a point with a potentially new vendor in July of 2027. We are going to have a transition potentially from Harvey to a new vendor and we need some consistency in being out there and enforcing the ordinance and communicating with residents. Ultimately that is a function that is not fulfilled by Harvey. That person who is just living and breathing the trash program being out there in the community. This will help us to do things he had already been planning on doing with a hypothetical new vendor. We were able to get after it sooner with Harvey and still proceeding as planned with the hiring of the sanitation coordinator.

Councilor Drew said it sounded like we are going to be saving \$200,000 from carts. He asked if this is going to help with the snow deficit. The update sounded like we were just over a million dollars or so in a shortfall. He asked how much of a shortfall is anticipated. This may help us staying with Harvey.

Mayor Beauregard said this past winter has cost roughly 2.29 million dollars in terms of snow and ice removal and the like. That is something that we end up having to go to Free Cash for every year. Nevertheless, not having to pay the total amount that we would have owed for that payment in the last year is certainly going to help. Right now, all our waste is shipped to a landfill in Wakefield. That comes with a price tag for per tonnage disposal costs. Something they are exploring internally is the prospect of looking for a partnership with a vendor to provide services along the lines waste to energy incineration. Right at 495 in Haverhill there is the Covanta plant. They provide that type of service and are saving municipalities a significant amount of money in the context of tonnage by way of reducing the costs of disposing of trash. There are other areas we need to investigate to find ways to save some money. Having that bill down that we otherwise would have had to pay, is a help.

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Councilor Drew said we are looking at roughly a two-million-dollar shortfall because of the amount of snow we have had this year.

Councilor Simard mentioned when he first got on the Council, they heard a song and dance from Harvey. They were the best thing since sliced pie, and it has not been the case. He hopes the city holds Harvey accountable this time because quite frankly they hold us hostage because they know if we get rid of them, no one is going to get our trash. He hopes the city stays on top of it and they come through, but he is not too confident they will.

Mayor Beauregard agreed with the frustration. He has had the same frustration. This also speaks to having that sanitation coordinator in place to be our eyes and ears and help us do a better job tracking any violations. We are expecting to hold the vendor to their side of the contract too. Having that designated person in the community being our eyes and ears is going to go a long way.

CAFO Report

CAFO Duprey was not present.

Chair Soto said she texted with the CAFO before the meeting and asked for her to reply to these requests to the Council as a whole. Hopefully, she can do that. Items below will remain on the agenda for April 6th regular meeting. She reminded Council that contracts are a one read item and without the CAFO present, if Councilors have reservations, please keep that in mind as well as with resolutions.

Projections on past and future funding sources as well as overtime on the Mayor's Executive Order # on Paid Parental Leave (Clr. Pesce)

Request of detailed accounting and clarification regarding the email from the CAFO dated 2/18/2026 Stadium Improvement Project (Chair Soto)

Request to CAFO: Pursuant to the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 200A (Unclaimed Property), specifically Section 4 and 7 Through 9, regarding property presumed abandoned and he required reporting and custody procedures, I am requesting clarification on how long any applicable performance deposits, warranty deposits, or developer bonds have been held in the City's possession, and whether the three-year abandonment period applies to these fund (Req. of Clr. Valley)

Requests of Councilors

Chair Soto said the request of Councilors were pretty much answered by the Mayor.

- Update regarding the results of the RFPs for garbage and recycling services March 5th Bid Results (Req. of Chair Soto)

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- GIS Map for Unaccepted Ways - Update on the GIS map for unaccepted ways is not yet live on the City's website and whether there is a tentative timeline for when it will be available to the public (Request of Clr. Valley to the Mayor and DPW Director) Mayor Beauregard stated the GIS Map is online. He encouraged people if they notice any glitches, let him know and they will take care of updating that.
- Echo Lane Sewer Connection – Update on the proposed sewer connection for Echo Lane, including whether there is a tentative schedule for when the project will begin, so residents can be kept informed (Request of Clr. Valley to the Mayor and DPW Director) Mayor Beauregard said he has no additional information to report. Keep on
- What is the status on the plan to rebuild or replace Police/Fire/DPW buildings? (Request of Clr. Santos)
- Request to City Solicitor – Has Section 9A of G.L. c. 200A been formally accepted by the City of Methuen and is it currently in effect? If so, what specific procedures must be followed to lawfully access, claim, and utilize such funds in full compliance with state law? Additionally, could those funds be used to improve unaccepted ways? (Request of Clr. Valley) Solicitor responded - Remove
- Status of New Trash Barrel order delivery and distribution (Req. of Clr. Drew) The city is almost through the list that they had to catch up on. There are forty residences left on the list. Keep on one more meeting.

Councilor Valley said some discrepancies have been reported on the GIS map. She will follow up with DPW.

Chair Soto asked if we did not get any RFP's for the garbage and that is the reason for extending the current contract.

Mayor Beauregard said the city was getting some bids but there were a lot of national and regional companies that were not able to commit to starting in 2026. Rather than start that from scratch they extended the RFP, changed the contract date, and that would allow for a more competitive process with some of those larger companies to be able to participate in the process which will hopefully let us do a better job at shopping for the best deal.

Chair Soto asked if the current administration or Mayor Perry administration ever discuss doing the trash in-house, which existed in the past.

Mayor Beauregard said that is something that maybe from time to time in the context of planning, it might come up as a conversation item. But it is not anything that we have taken seriously in terms of exploring that, just given the issues with vehicle procurement and maintenance and staffing. This is something that former Mayor DiZoglio dealt with during his time in office. He refers to the difficulties with switching from when the city was a town, the town had their own in-house trash program and they found that it was a cost savings to transition working with a vendor. This is something that we did have at one point, not since the 90's. Nevertheless, he is all ears about any opportunity to save money. If things were to change and it

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was cost prohibitive to work with a vendor and there were opportunities perhaps for the city, we should not close the door. It is not something they are entertaining now.

Public Service:

Grants: None

Licenses: None

Contract(s):

C-26-78 Addendum to C-25-78 Evoqua Water Technologies, LLC, 558 Clark Road, Tewksbury, MA 01876 – Emergency Waiver for the Replacement of Sluice Gates & Traveling Screens at the Water Intake at WTP - \$335,850.00 **to correct clerical error to reflect the correct contract Amount of \$355,850.00 ITEM WITHDRAWN**

The Solicitor explained the original vote had the correct amounts in it, in the contract itself. It was only a clerical error on the face sheet. the previous Council vote did appropriate the correct amount of money.

Councilor Drew asked if the Council had to vote to remove this item from the agenda. Solicitor said he was unsure how it got on the agenda.

C-26-79 B & H Foto & Electronics, Corp., 420 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, for (25) HP ProBook, Windows 11, 16 GB and 25 EA. Of 24” monitors and docking stations in the Amount of \$31,699.75

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Simard to approve.

Mayor Beauregard noted a resident reached out with some questions during public participation about the cost and whether the city was getting the best deal. To clarify the city is bound to various procurement laws. As part of this process, the city had to obtain three quotes from vendors. This information is included. B & H was the lowest quote received. The highest amount was \$38,212.25. The second highest amount was \$35,999.00 and then the lowest quote was \$31,699.75. Perhaps in the private world where those procurement laws are not in place, it is a little different. In the context of local government, we must get the quotes, and this was the lowest bid because of the process that is required by law.

Councilor DiZoglio asked if the city is purchasing 25 of them to replace the ones that are out of date. “Or is this the best that got us a deal by going with 25?”

Luis Santiago explained that, during COVID, the city purchased 250 laptops. As part of a CIP plan that he made, they decided to buy from 25 to 50 computers every year, so the city will not have the cost of buying 250 laptops at once. In prior years, Council was not seeing him getting a contract for those because he would buy 20 at a time so the contract is less than \$25,000. Residents see the price. If you go to Best Buy and buy a laptop for four hundred dollars that is good for home use. Business laptops are made to be on 8 hours a day, five days a week. Home laptops are usually made to be used 2 hours a day, four days a week. That is the difference in price.

Councilor Drew asked Luis Santiago if they are the level of what he wanted on each one.

Mr. Santiago responded yes. According to state contract, they must send the same specs to at least three vendors. Because the purchasing process here is a little bit slow, sometimes we must change the quote two or three times because when we get the quote the next day, they do not have it anymore. They must see at least five or six quotes before they decide on what they are going to get. It is not just laptops. Its laptops, monitors, and docking stations.

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Councilor Santos asked what happens to the ones being replaced.

Mr. Santiago said usually those are very old laptops. But they try to buy the same family laptops even though they may have different internal components, the outside components like the keyboard and the screen can be used. But the ones that cannot be used are recycled.

Mayor Beauregard said the funding is coming from the CIP. The infrastructure line in the CIP is \$109,086 and available. There is plenty of funding in that line to cover the purchase.

Chair Soto mentioned the CAFO sent that to Council on March 12th.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Other Officers and Committee Reports

Councilor DiZoglio reported they had their second Public Safety Committee meeting on March 12th at 4:00. They began with the safety of the Rail Trail discussion, talked about how DPW is working on getting estimates of getting power down to the Rail Trail in some areas. They are also going to take a tour of the Rail Trail possibly this week or next week. Another is to get a pathway that used to be near the police station and hopefully get that cleared out so people can gain another access route outside to the police station because they think public safety is awful if they can't get access to the police station to the Rail Trail. Another discussion was the traffic light on Pleasant Valley Street going onto 213 near the old Walgreens. That is a personal thing for him because as the traffic going towards the stadium and you are going to Howe Street, the left lane to go onto 213 is green while the other way is going green. He asked why that is, which is people do not know that the other side is turning green. He asked about past accidents and the Chief has made it very clear there have been a lot of accidents over there. Unfortunately, that belongs to the state and we have got to go through Mass DOT to figure that one out. Something that is important to him will be brought forward for the next meeting for the Willette family, by adopting a proclamation of Motorcycle Awareness Month. He grew up with the Willette family. The father was his coach. He played basketball with Billy. Austin was killed on his motorcycle by a driver that was texting and driving. He coached him in football for two years. The family reached out to him to do this proclamation on education. He thanked Councilor Valley and Chair Soto for supporting that. If you look at the ceiling, there's cameras now in the hall because of Councilor Valley taking the lead on that. Chair Soto brought up an ordinance about utility permits for companies that come in and tear up our roads to hold them more responsible letting residents know and other things like fines as well. Also, an ordinance to establish a process of getting handicap sign in front of your house. They are going from the Boston way. It needs a better process in place because everybody feels like because some people might think they are entitled to that one spot but they have to understand when you get a handicap sign in front of your house, that's for all handicaps, not just you. he is going to try to get another meeting in before the next council meeting, especially the Rail Trail getting connections with Mass DOT already. They are really excited for Methuen to do the mural down at the tunnel. He will be sending a notice to artists in the city. They are going to have to import their drawings because Mass DOT will not accept, without them knowing what we are doing. They will be putting a plan together for lighting, etc. Also, he did try to contact the Mayor of Salem, MA because they just passed 34 historical lantern lights in their city for \$194,000. One was a grant. There are grants out there. He is trying to get in touch with the Mayor to see how it was handled and how much it cost for that total project so we could possibly go that route to get

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lights going down there. He thanked everyone for participating. It seems like everyone is onboard for it. Hopefully, we can do more with this.

Councilor Valley reported there was an unaccepted ways committee meeting today and they discussed the process, transparency, and accountability around the city for unaccepted roads in the city, petition requirements and the process for the road acceptance. They clarified the difference between. There is a need to improve transparency on the city website, including a clear step by step petition process requirements and points of contact. They also discussed funding options and the structure cost and the impact that it is going to have on the residents. They discussed friendly eminent domain as a potential tool to resolve ownership issues when necessary. A key issue raised was Jade Street vs. Temple Street. Both are part of the same development. Temple Street was accepted, and the bond released. Jade Street was not accepted, and they will follow up with DPW to confirm whether Jade Street meets city standards and why it was excluded.

Councilor Pesce reported that the last time the Finance Committee met they had discussed April 8th as a meeting to meet with the school side Finance Committee. There is a scheduling conflict with MCTV that day. She wanted to let the residents know that she, Councilor Drew, and Councilor Santos are working together along with the School Finance Committee to try to find another date they can meet. She will keep the Council and the residents informed.

Unfinished Business

Resolutions:

TR-26-16 Resolution Authorizing Expenditure of \$1,300 from the Castle Fund for the Methuen Business Alliance/Greater Haverhill Chamber (Request of Commission on Trust Funds)

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Valley to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

TR-26-18 Resolution Authorizing Transfer of \$292,000 from General Fund DPW Personal Service Expenses to General Fund DPW Other Expenses to fund increase in utility costs (Req. of Mayor Beauregard)

MOTION BY: Councilor Valley, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

TR-26-19 Resolution Authorizing Transfer of \$20,000 from General Fund Fire Personal Service Expenses to General Fund Fire Other Expenses to fund increase in utility costs (Req. of Mayor Beauregard) MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Santos to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

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TR-26-20 Resolution Authorizing Transfer of \$10,000 to General Fund City Clerk Other Expenses, of which \$5,000 from Fund Economic and Community Development Personal Services and \$5,000 from General Fund City Clerk Personal Services to fund additional election related costs (Req. of Mayor Beauregard)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Santos to approve. UPON
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-21 Resolution Authorizing Transfer of \$2,500 from General Fund Legal Personal Service Expenses to General Fund City Council Personal Service Expenses to fund unanticipated personnel costs (Req. of Mayor Beauregard)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Santos to approve. UPON
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-22 Resolution Authorizing Transfer of \$60,000 from General Fund Economic and Community Development Personal Service Expenses to General Fund Health, Human Service, and Inspections Personal Service Expenses to fund unanticipated personnel costs (Req. of Mayor Beauregard)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Santos to approve.

Councilor DiZoglio asked what the unanticipated cost was.

Mayor Beauregard explained they budgeted last year to hire a building commissioner and budgeted the position for half a year for that person's salary. The city found the right candidate well before they got to the half-way point in the year. Given the fact that there were some openings in the Economic and Community Development, for instance the Economic Developer role that has been funded at \$80,000/\$85,000 for the year. We are in the process now of hiring for that position. Given the fact that we have not use that line item so far, that allows some available funding to cover the cost of hiring the building commissioner earlier than expected.
UPON VOTE: 8 yes, 1 abstention (Clr. Marsan)

TR-26-24 Resolution Approving the Oakland Avenue Trust's Offer to Purchase the Oakland Avenue School with Such Other Conditions and Terms as Are Further Determined Appropriate by the Mayor and Authorizing the Mayor to Execute Whatever Documents Are Required to Close the Sale and Convey the Property (Request of Mayor David P. Beauregard, Jr.) (Mayor requests this matter be postponed until a date certain, the April 6th Meeting, for further discussion and final vote)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Simard to table to next meeting.
UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-25 A Resolution Regarding Social Media Safety for Youth Under Age 16 (Req. of Mayor Beauregard, Councilors John Drew, Ella MacLaren, and Jana Pesce)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor MacLaren to approve.

Mayor Beauregard said during Public Participation a resident had asked some questions about the Mental Health Task Force and some aspects about the resolution. Just to clarify for the Council and any residents who may be watching, this will establish a new policy formalizing that the School Department has been trying to do in terms of limiting access to social media on school owned devices. This is a city policy, more broadly speaking. Also, we are talking about

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this concept of developing resources for parents, talking about a study that would look at the impact of social media use on our kids here in Methuen. That's the one aspect that is still a little open ended, where his thinking with the study aspect is to perhaps partner with local civic groups within our own school district, but also this could be a great opportunity to partner with Northern Essex, Merrimack, UMass Lowell, etc., on finding an opportunity to put together a more like a report academic style report, along those lines. He wanted to clarify that this design would be anything that would have political implications that had been suggested by the resident. This is more of a science base approach to dealing with this issue of social media and its impact on the mental health of our youth without any other strings attached to it.

Councilor MacLaren offered an additional point of clarification on what the resident was discussing about concerns that this might migrate somehow into looking into people's private devices, what students are viewing on devices that are not associated with school devices. Her understanding of this resolution is that would never be an ambition of ours. She would like the Mayor to address why that is not the case.

Mayor Beauregard said that is correct. Nothing in the resolution deals with any private devices. That would be a huge overreach of government at any level to have any involvement in that. This is only any city owned devices that are taxpayer funded and managed by the city.

Councilor DiZoglio explained the reason he supports this is because he is dealing with students right now that are eleven and twelve years old where the result of these websites Tik Tok, Instagram, all these things and they are believing people on these websites. He had a student that listened to someone on Tik Tok that said there was 47 planets in our solar system and brought it back and told him and everybody is laughing about it. But this is how they are getting their information from. They are believing someone that is sitting in their bedrooms or wherever they are and believing them. It is not making them smarter. It is not making them involved with the world around them. It is affecting them and how they can make critical thinking. He puts questions in front of his students all the time. They cannot make a thought without some type of device to look it up. Even when they look it up, they are not looking up the right information. It is time, not just city, state and the federal level needs to start taking this because if you did not see the latest report card that we got as a country. We failed in every subject in education. Seniors graduated on 38% reading level. Eighth graders were 41%. We were below 50% nationwide. It is because kids are spending more time on Tik Tok and Instagram and chatting away than talking to each other and sitting there with a book. That is a fact. He sees it every day. The first thing the kids do when they get out of school their phone come out of their backpacks. They are on Tik Tok and Instagram or whatever they all do just watching these videos that have no educational value to them.

Councilor MacLaren echoed a lot of Councilor DiZoglio's comments. She wants to make sure we are not detracting from the point of this legislation, which is not to judge young people for their consumption of media. She wants to make sure that this is a space where we are prioritizing young people's mental health and that in approaching this legislation we are not making anyone feel further isolated or judged by our attempts to mediate the mental health crisis that's going on. We are not looking to do any sort of supervision of the specific media that they are consuming. She is not interested in specific posts and does not think any of them are. They are not trying to suggest that this generation lacks the capacity for critical thinking, and we can somehow attribute that to this one social media issue. What this is about, by enlarge, is the mental health crisis. She wants to make sure they are very clear that is what they are addressing

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and not interested in monitoring any private devices, not interested in monitoring exactly what students are doing or being all up in their business. This is about giving them and their families the tools to navigate what can be a very complicated relationship with this 24/7 access to other people's highlight reel of their lives.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Ordinance(s): None

New Business:

Resolutions:

TR-26-26 A Resolution Amending the City Council Rules Regarding Moments of Silence (sponsored by Councilor Michael Simard)

Councilor Simard said we could all agree that the moment of silence would be to honor those residents or people that are associated with Methuen who have passed that we show them the proper respect at a Council meeting. We all get that. In recent past, there was some meetings, he did research, and one of persons Council remembered was from Minnesota, another from Chicago, another from LA and some were recent. It detracts from who we honor in Methuen. He spoke to the Chair about how those names were submitted and she said it was through the proper channels. She gave him guidance on how to start a resolution because we had to change the Council Rules. He then contacted the Solicitor who helped draw this resolution. Councilor Simard said he is in favor of it. Several Councilors contacted him with friendly amendments which agrees to tweak it. As far as any political remembrance, there is a difference forum for that. He would be more than happy to direct that person to the proper permitting process if they want to do a vigil for that person. We have got to keep it simple. Keep it with people that are associated with Methuen or who have contributed to Methuen whether it be at the local, state, or federal level.

Councilor DiZoglio said he agrees with Councilor Simard. A Moment of Silence to him is not political. It is to honor the people that have impacted our city and have contributed or being a resident. He cares about the City of Methuen. As an elected official, his job is to take care of the people in Methuen. Let us keep it to Methuen and not politicize it.

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Pesce to approve.

Councilor Pesce agreed with what has been said. She thanked Councilor Simard for bringing this up. As a non-partisan board a lot of these names seem somewhat political in nature. We do not want to be off putting to any residents coming before this board. We want to be accessible. We want it to be a comfortable space for our residents to openly participate. She is in support of the resolution.

Councilor Santos said she reached out to Councilor Simard. The only thing that she sees is Council would not be able to honor anyone outside of Methuen. For example, a Legislator passes or a Senator or police outside of Methuen or someone in the Army, Council would not be able to honor those people who are serving our country. If we add it to the resolution (something along those lines) she will agree. She brought it up to Councilor Simard and he agreed to the change.

MOTION BY: Councilor Santos, seconded by Councilor Drew to amend to add language "anyone that has served in our government or military".

Councilor Pesce asked if they would have some tie to Methuen.

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Councilor Santos responded not just anyone in the world but anyone in our government or U.S. Military.

Councilor MacLaren “not just anyone in world” implies there would be ties to Methuen. The friendly amendment is already addressed in “the members of the Methuen community who have lived, worked, studied or otherwise contributed positively to the Methuen community”. To her, Council can make the extrapolation based on that wording, that includes relatives of Methuen residents who, for example, are in the Army or Legislators, whoever it may be. What Councilor Santos is saying, to her understanding in reading it, may already be encompassed in the resolution.

Councilor Drew disagreed in the sense that if we had some military that died in a Black Hawk in the current fight we have going on in the middle east. That may be something Councilor Simard may want to recognize. They may not have a direct tie, but he would say, as a military force, having that line in there may allow for situations of that nature.

Councilor Simard said he thinks the resolution covers what is being said. Council could say there is relevance to Methuen, a soldier that is protecting our freedom in Methuen would qualify to be remembered at this meeting. It is just the wording. If we keep it generalized it makes it easier. He would trust the Chair and Vice-Chair to make that decision without it coming to the floor where we discuss and possibly embarrass someone who presented that.

Councilor Pesce said for military she would agree with Councilor Drew. But, again, to Councilor MacLaren’s point we drew it back to someone on the Council who might have a connection to that person or someone from Methuen who might say hey, listen, *I’m a Marine, I’m really upset my brother passed, whatever the appropriate wording is*. Her concern is when you say any government member, now we are getting into say Congressional members that pass from one political party or not but bringing it right back to where we are already. That is the concern, not that it may or may not be tragic, not that people may or may not feel a certain way about it. But, again, we are politicizing something over and above the concerns that directly affect this body. By adding that language we are going to be right back in. She does not want to be the one saying “yes” or “no” and having to answer to the resident.

Councilor Santos said she feels we must honor people that served our country one way or the other, impacting our city in some way. She feels we must honor those people and wants to make sure they are included in the resolution.

Councilor Pesce agreed with that entirely but again, you said they impact our city. So, you bring it back to the city, which she agrees with. But the wording needs to reflect they somehow have some tie to this body which encompasses the interests of the residents.

Councilor Santos, let us say the President dies, can Council hold a Moment of Silence for the President or not. He does have ties to our city and the Senate too.

Councilor Pesce disagreed. The President may affect our country, yes, but does not think every Legislator would impact us the same way.

Councilor DiZoglio said he sees the point. The President is totally different. If it is a Congressman person that he does not even recognize the name dies in California, he is not going to take a moment of silence. If it is a Congressional person from Massachusetts then yes, we take a moment of silence for that person because they impact our city. If every elder person dies Council could have moment of silence every other meeting. Council should just keep it the ties to the City of Methuen.

Councilor Santos agreed to keep it to ties in Methuen and State of Massachusetts.

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Chair Soto to the Solicitor: *“Isn’t this within our rules and regulations already something that the Chair has discretion to do?”* For example, the emails that we have been receiving for moments of silence, at the discretion to the Chair. The Chair could say we will put them in the minutes, but we will not read them out loud. Some may contradict that all lives matter and someone brings a life that has passed, they should all be held with that moment of silence. That is an argument as well. She asked for clarification from the City Solicitor. As the duty of Chair, she will never tell anyone not to put something on the agenda. That is not her role. Her role is to make sure Councilors get what they need on this floor. She wants clarification, as one of the duties of the Chair, is that something that, in her case she puts everything on the floor, everything that was a request of her constituents.

Solicitor O’Neill explained there is nothing in the rules that addresses this issue. An individual Councilor could put a Moment of Silence on the agenda if they wished. When this issue was raised, he was asked to address it. It is appropriate for the Council to address it as best it can in the rules. Simpler is always better. The Council can address it this way. They can leave it to the discretion of the Chair, whatever it wishes. He makes no judgement of what the better way is of doing that. The language in here would allow for what Councilor Santos is interested in. It says, as Councilor MacLaren pointed out who has worked, studied, or otherwise contributed positively to the Methuen community. It is a broad standard or for persons of local, regional, statewide, or national significance that are otherwise approved by and deemed appropriate by the Council. Very broad standard. That language would mean the Council would have to vote on it. You could change it to approved by the Chair if the Council felt it was appropriate for the Chair to make those decisions. This issue is a little difficult. You do not want to be putting these votes before the Council each time because they are a brief remembrance. He tried to strike a balance between having moments of remembrance vs. people objecting and things like that, the incompatible types of things. For the clarity of the board the amendment that he heard would amend this, after the word Methuen community, to say, anyone who has served in our government or military, or for persons of local, national, or statewide significance. That is the amendment that is on the floor, unless it is further amended. It would say “anyone who has served in our government or military”.

UPON ROLL CALL (amendment) 8 yes, 1 out of the room (Clr. Santos)

Councilor Drew said he got in touch with Councilor Simard. He had a few other concerns on this, mainly five items that he would like to adjust. The way he reads this is it puts a lot of power to the Chair. It is not just an individual person. It is our Council meeting, as a body. Council, as a body, should be working together to make the decision on these things as they are brought to us. With the amount of adjustments, he would like to make, he would like to make a motion to table.

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Valley to table.

UPON VOTE: 8 yes, 1 out of the room (Clr. Santos)

TR-26-27 A Resolution Amending the City Council Rules Regarding Citations and Proclamations (sponsored by Councilor Jana Pesce)

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Valley to approve.

Councilor Pesce said she received some calls on this. She did a little research and wants to make some changes. She would like to table it but prior to doing that she wants to see if there is anyone who did not reach out to her that had concerns or wanted it amended in any way. Some

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of the concerns were about the number of citations on it. She is open to suggestion. It is not meant to deter or to detract from the power of the Councilors. It is in the spirit to maintain exclusivity of these citations and proclamations and the exceptionality of those. Before she goes back to the drawing board with this and with the Solicitor she wanted to hear if anybody had anything to add to it.

Councilor Valley reported that the City of Boston has a cap, seven per City Councilor per year. It is a bigger city, so we must take that into consideration.

Councilor Pesce asked if they expire at the end of the year or carry over. Councilor Valley indicated she would call and find out.

Councilor Santos said she reached out to Vice-Chair Pesce and spoke about this. She feels that the fact that we can uplift the members of our community by bringing them into the hall and showing our constituents that there's more to show in our city than the hate, the bullying that we are facing and everything else. She feels putting a limit to citations is a little bit strange. She has been one of the Councilors that has been promoting this the most. She asked if Councilor Pesce feels that any of the citations that she has given out has bothered her in some way.

Councilor Pesce said this is not personal, which she thought she made clear to Councilor Santos. This is where we agreed to disagree. Her idea of a citation is something spectacular. It is hard, because even today, those people had members, or they had a business that almost 20 years. But again, like Councilor Simard's with the Moment of Silence and you did with this request. But we always want to tie it back to Methuen "*How are we helping the residents?*" Even as a business, she wished she could give a citation to every business and we had this discussion. "*Thank you, thank you for coming to Methuen*". We value them here. That was the word that used. We want to make sure that we value them. Councilor Pesce said that she agreed but does not know that this is the proper channel for it, for every business. She is not saying that you are suggesting every business get a citation, but she does not think it is the proper channel to do it. Anybody can be recognized. Any entity can be recognized at the will of the Council. It does not necessarily have to be a proclamation or a citation. *While we value people, I just think it is hard because then where do we draw the line, right? What about the businesses that have been 40 years and never hand one? What about the business that has been here 60 years? 10 years? 5 years? Where do we draw the line? It is going to end up being a political maneuver against all of us in our districts "this person gave it out to 15 businesses"* She has not given out to any businesses. Maybe she is not a good Councilor. She does not want it to be political in nature. She is not suggesting that is the Councilor's motivation behind it. In her profession she looks at the extremities, she looks at the extremes, and that is what she said to Councilor Santos. This is the discussion we had. If we want, the way it reads right now, Councilors could each give ten citations at a meeting. They would not but they could. She is looking for some guidance and parameters set so Councilors do not start competing with citations.

Solicitor O'Neill said if people have ideas it would be helpful to him in terms of changing this.

MOTION BY: Councilor Marsan, seconded by Councilor Drew to table. UPON VOTE:
UNANIMOUS

TR-26-28 A Resolution Accepting the Gift of a New State-of-the-Art Scoreboard for the Girls' Varsity Softball Field (Burnham Road Field 3) from the Methuen Athletic Improvement Committee and the Methuen High School Boosters (Requested by Mayor Beauregard)

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MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Santos to approve.

Councilor Marsan said we have just made huge strides at the Burnham Field, how we fixed it up. The city has spent a lot of money there, a lot of effort there, MAIC is doing this to put the school board up. This is excellent. If helps. We fix the dugouts, and it is just amazing what is going on for the softball. It is about time they got some recognition for it. He thanked the MAIC.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

[EPA requested]

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Valley to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-29 A Resolution Authorizing Expenditures of \$700 from the Edwin J. Castle Fund for the Methuen DEI Committee (Requested by Mayor Beauregard and the Commission on Trust Funds)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

EPA REQUESTED

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Valley to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-30 A Resolution Authorizing Expenditures Not to Exceed \$16,920 from the Edwin J. Castle Fund for Methuen 300 (Requested by Mayor Beauregard and the Commission on Trust Funds)

MOTION BY: Councilor Santos, seconded by Councilor Drew to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-26-31 A Resolution Authorizing Expenditures of \$290 from the Edwin J. Castle Fund for Historic Methuen (Requested by Mayor Beauregard and the Commission on Trust Funds)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Ordinances:

TO-26-8 An Ordinance Amending the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of the City of Methuen – Ayers Village Road, Parcel 702-72-83 (Request of Property Owner/Petitioner) (Table to Community Development for Joint Public Hearing)

MOTION BY: Councilor Marsan, seconded by Councilor Valley to table for a Joint Public Hearing with Community Development and Planning. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TO-26-9 An Ordinance Allowing Residential Cottage Food Production (sponsored by Councilor Patricia Valley)

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Pesce to approve.

Councilor Valley said this is not a new concept. Massachusetts already allows cottage food production under state law. What this ordinance does is gives clear local structure so residents can participate legally and safely.

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Councilor Drew referred to a conversation they had with the ladies in the audience. His issue with this is only at the end. He would like to place an amendment at the end of the ordinance. A lot this falls upon us of having the staff in place to do it. He does not want to have it stuck in a drawer and nothing get done with it.

MOTION BY: Councilor Drew, seconded by Councilor Simard to amend to add language “this ordinance shall be effective no later than six months upon passage regardless of staffing”.

Councilor DiZoglio expressed concern with individuals missing the opportunity to participate in a farmers’ market or something like that which requires a license or a permit. If this does not go into effect for six months, they might miss the opportunity to go to the farmers’ market. He asked if there was anyway Council could approve it and they could go get their permit to start their farmers’ market.

Councilor Drew said his thought behind the amendment is to, not to force the administration to do something, but to act as a catalyst to making sure that this position gets filled quickly. We know that the budget season is coming and want to ensure that it gets on that line item. The Health department has stated that they have current concerns to be able to monitor it. We know that the ladies who are here are trying to get their business up and running. We do not want to hinder any of that. What you are asking to do to help them get to the farmers’ market and get their business moving is a different item that we can get to and maybe talk about a pilot program specific to that. This ordinance allows this framework to be in place. Then the amendment puts that tool in place to have the staffing addressed.

Mayor Beauregard said this is a topic they have been discussing internally. He thanked Councilor Valley for bringing this forward to make it happen. The challenge they had during discussions internally was exactly the issue that is being outlined here and thanked Councilor Valley for including the staffing provisions. We currently have two Health inspectors currently who must go through every Methuen business. They have a regular schedule that they follow in terms of inspections and ensuring that they can protect the public by ensuring that the rules are being followed. What this would do, in effect, it would add, in some cases, homes to their list of businesses that they must visit along with all the other regular businesses. The concern is that with the current staffing that we have, it would be a challenge to implement effectively. But, nevertheless, he thinks that the amendment, what the Councilor is getting at, it is that we are committing to having this on the books regardless. We are committing collectively, as a city, to support these businesses that are looking to go about this activity. Another benefit here is that he plans on trying to expand our staffing in the HHSI context in the upcoming budget because we need to enable our city, our businesses to be able to grow. To do that we need the staffing to move people through these processes quicker. Whether it is establishing this formally as a policy and committing to it by supporting the expansion of that department. All of this is a very good thing, including the proposed amendment. It moves the city in a positive direction.

Solicitor O’Neill clarified the wording of the amendment language which will say “this ordinance shall take effect no later than six months after passage regardless of staffing”

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Chair Soto asked Councilor Valley came across how many of these permits were issued out in the cities she researched.

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Councilor Valley said it was less than 20 in Wilmington. She noted it is not that common.

MAIN MOTION as amended UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Any Other Business for the Good and Welfare of the Community

Councilor Drew reminded everyone of the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Saturday, March 21st, 2026, beginning at 12:00 noon at Nicolson Stadium. Director Steve Angelo, Councilor DiZoglio, and the committee have done a great job with this.

Adjourn

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Drew to adjourn. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Linda Gagnon
COUNCIL CLERK

I do hereby certify that at a meeting of which a quorum is present, the foregoing minutes were approved by the Methuen City Council by a unanimous vote on April 6, 2026.

Lisa Yarid Ferry
Assistant Council Clerk